

TO THE

TOTNES

Rural District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL
OFFICER OF HEALTH.

For the year ending December 31st, 1909.

Gentlemen,—

I have again the pleasure of laying my annual report before you, and in it you will find, as usual, a resume of the general health of the district, the number of births and deaths, the number of zymotic diseases, as well as the principal improvements, and sanitary works carried out during the year.

The district is, as you are aware, for the convenience of carrying out the sanitary work divided into two sub-districts, No. 1 Sub-district comprises the parishes of Ashprington, Berry Pomeroy, Churston Ferrers,

Cornworthy, Dittisham, Dartington, Halwell, Harberton, Littlehempston, Morleigh, Marldon, Kingswear, and Stoke Gabriel, the acreage of the combined parishes is 32,326 acres, and the population 7,721. No. 2 Sub-district comprises the parishes of Buckfastleigh West, Dean Prior, Diptford, Holne, North Huish, Rattery, Staverton, South Brent, Ugborough. The combined acreage is 77,746 acres, and the population 5,460; the combined acreage 77,001, and the combined population 12,848.

BIRTHS.—During the year 253 births were registered: 137 boys and 116 girls. These figures shew an increase of 16 over the previous year, when 237 were registered. Of the births registered 8 were illegitimate.

DEATHS.—During the year 113 deaths were registered—70 males, and 43 females; 30 less than the previous year, when 143 were registered. These figures give a death rate of 8.7 per 1,000 of the population, which is the lowest ever recorded in the district.

PLYMOUTH BOROUGH ASYLUM, which I have taken as a separate district, has a population of 449. During the year there were registered 19 deaths—8 males and 11 females—giving a death rate of 44.5 per 1,000 of the population, which is considerably lower than the preceding year, when the rate was 67.4 per 1,000; in 1907 the rate was 80.1 per 1,000. Under the first year 14 deaths were registered, which is three less than the preceding year. Of the above deaths one was that of an illegitimate child; from the 1st to the 5th year, 6; from the 5th to the 15th year, 4; from the 15th to the 25th year, 5; from the 25th to the 65th year, 31; from the 65th year upwards, 53—8 of whom exceeded the 80th year. The deaths were

classified as follows:—Whooping cough, 1; influenza, 1; enteritis, 2; phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis), 5; other tuberculous diseases, 3; cancer, 5; bronchitis, 15; pneumonia, 2; venereal diseases, 1; premature birth, 2; diseases and accidents of parturition, 2; heart disease, 26; accidents, 3; suicides, 1; all other causes, 44. It will be noted that no death occurred from any of the notifiable diseases. It will be noticed also that there is a very considerable decrease in the number of deaths from cancer and phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis), from the preceding year 1908, when 14 and 10 deaths respectively occurred from those diseases. The number of deaths of children under 1 year is still high, and as I have stated in previous reports, I am of opinion that many of the deaths are owing to the ignorance of those having charge of the infants.

NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE ACT.—Under this heading 16 cases were notified, which is 12 less than the previous year, and considering the size of the district is very highly satisfactory. This is the smallest number of cases notified in the district since the Act was adopted in 1890. The diseases were classified as follows:—Diphtheria, 1; scarlet fever, 8; erysipelas, 4; enteric fever, 2; puerperal fever, 1. The case of diphtheria was of a mild type, and calls for no special comment. Of the 8 cases of scarlet fever, 5 occurred in the parish of Staverton, and as far as I could discover, were contact cases from the adjoining parish of Broadhempston, in the Newton Abbot district, where several cases occurred. Of the three other cases two occurred in the parish of Ugborough, and one in South Brent. All the cases were of a mild type. Of the two cases of enteric fever,

both occurred in the parish of Ugborough; one was imported from Wales, and the other was caused by the insanitary condition of the premises. The one case of puerperal fever I attribute to the insanitary condition of the premises. The four cases of erysipelas were of a mild type, and call for no comment. It is remarkable that all the cases occurred in the No. 2 District. All cases on receipt of notice, were visited as soon as possible, and instructions given to prevent the spread of the disease.

SCHOOLS.—It was found necessary to close the schools at South Brent (Infant Department), and Rattery, in consequence of epidemics of measles; and at Ugborough in consequence of an epidemic of influenza.

DAIRIES and COWHOUSES have been regularly inspected, and, on the whole, have been found in a sanitary condition. Any defects on being reported to the owner or occupier have been immediately remedied, and all have been regularly whitewashed.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES have been regularly visited, and, as a rule, have been found in a sanitary condition, and have all been regularly whitewashed.

WATER SUPPLY.—Owing to a wetter summer there was a more plentiful supply than in the previous year. The water supply of Ugborough is still engaging the attention of the Council. An abundant and lasting supply to the village is very much needed, both for private purposes, and for flushing the sewers. I have for years reported on the deficiency of the water supply to this village, and greatly fear the result if an epidemic was to arise.

STOKE GABRIEL is still badly in want of an increased supply. Negotiations are still pending, but owing to some requirements of the Local Government Board not being carried out, the supply has not yet been obtained.

HOLNE has not yet had its water supply increased. A Local Government Board inquiry has been held with a view of borrowing the money required for carrying out the work, and I have no doubt that before long the necessary supply will be obtained.

MARLDON, as I stated in previous reports, is badly in need of an increased supply, but I fear that until the Paignton Council increase their supply, it will not be possible to obtain it.

DIPTFORD has had its water supply increased and extended to other parts of the village.

The rainfall was greater than in the previous years, and varied in different parts of the district. At Holne, 650 feet above sea level, it was 57.76 inches; at South Brent, 500 feet above sea level, it was 63.36 inches. Both these places adjoin the forest of Dartmoor. At Kingswear, at sea level it was 42.35 inches. The wettest months were October and December, and the driest February and May.

The principal improvements carried out were the construction of new sewers at Aish, and at the back of the New Hall, in the parish of South Brent. These were recommended in my last year's report. The new sewer recommended at Kingswear is in progress, and will greatly add to the sanitary

condition of the place. Dittisham has had its sewerage improved, by extending the sewer in Manor Street. In addition to the above, several minor improvements have been carried out, such as the abolition of insanitary closets, and the substitution of new ones; doing away with insanitary pig's houses, manure heaps, etc.

Some cases of overcrowding were reported, but were abated on receipt of the usual notice.

Several new houses have been erected, and where the sanitary arrangements and water supply were satisfactory, the usual certificates of occupation were granted. In a few cases it was necessary to withhold the certificate until some necessary work was carried out.

I have tested many samples of water, but did not find it necessary to condemn any.

DISINFECTANTS have been freely distributed in every parish, and the sewers have had a plentiful supply thrown down them.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS' ACT.—These have been kept under observation, and it was found necessary to find fault with the ventilation in five instances, four of which were immediately attended to, and the other will be remedied as soon as possible. Some bakehouses also required white-washing, which was immediately attended to.

I have, in company with the Inspectors, visited every parish at stated intervals, and reported to the Council on any matter requiring their attention.

I should like to call the attention of the Council to the above very favourable report, more particularly in two instances: the first being the extremely low death rate of 8.7 per 1,000 of the population, which, I am of opinion, will be about the lowest in England; the second being the very small number of infectious diseases notified.

I am Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

Henry S Johnson
M O H

Totnes, February 16th, 1910.



